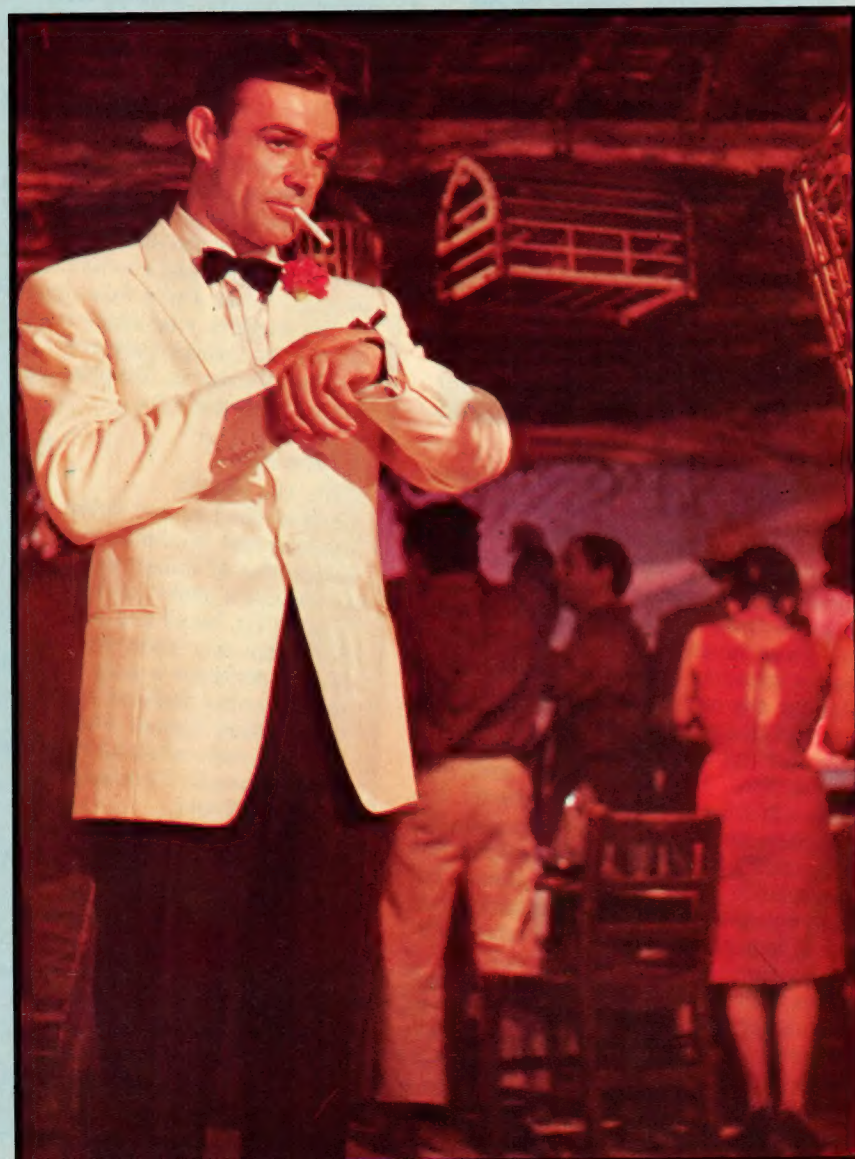


IN BONDAGE

Warners release *From Russia With Love* and *Goldfinger* on video — and another piece of cinema history arrives on the small screen. Allan Bryce samples the current offering, and notes that there's plenty more where they came from!



When author Ian Fleming was writing his first novel in 1952, he searched for a name for his fast-living, womanising, ultra-sophisticated spy hero, and found it on a book that graced his coffee table: *Birds of the West Indies*, by the ornithologist James Bond. Some thirty years later that name is part of popular mythology; James Bond 007 — licensed to kill, hero of twelve feature films that have grossed more than six hundred million dollars at the box office.

The Bond films are the closest thing in entertainment to a license to print money, and their release on video by Warners will no doubt swell the coffers even more! Bond's first screen appearance was in *Dr. No* (1962) — which was conceived basically as a "thick cut"

achieved a certain popularity but were not yet universally known.

Film editor Peter Hunt (who later directed the Bond opus *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*) suggested a good-looking Scot named Sean Connery for the part, having seen him in the minor British comedy *On The Fiddle*, and Connery got it despite strong competition from Patrick McGeehan and Richard Johnson. Connery became the Bond most preferred by fans of the series — later incarnations being Australian male model George Lazenby (unsuccessful, and appearing once only in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*) and the flippantly humorous Roger Moore who took over Connery's mantle in later years — bringing a different but nonetheless potent appeal of his own.

But Connery seems to personify the character (as written) more than the others, although in later years he became disenchanted with the typecasting that he felt dogged him in the role. In *Dr. No* he was up against the villainous Joseph Wiseman, who was determined to cause world destruction by pirating missile systems from his Jamaican island retreat. This is typical of Bond film villains — they never think small, and are usually irredeemably evil. *Dr. No's* mixture of action, sex and colourful locations made it a runaway success and a second Bond film soon followed.

From *Russia With Love* — which Warners have issued on video — is one of the very best of the series. Director Terence Young, who also made *Dr. No*, brought this as close as the films ever came to capturing the spirit of shadowy espionage that infused Fleming's novels. The story has to do with Bond's quest for a top-secret decoding machine called "The Lektor" — a search that takes him to exotic Istanbul and into the welcoming arms of beautiful Russian agent Tatiana Romanova (Daniela Bianchi). Unknown to Bond, he is walking into a trap set by the deadly SPECTRE (Special Executor for Counter-Intelligence, Terrorism, Revenge and Extortion) — the organisation that employed the maniacal Dr No: they want Bond dead and train deadly assassin Red Grant (Robert Shaw) to do the job.

The action unfolds as a series of dangerous encounters, with Bond ducking death at every turn. Pursued at the end by half the Russian navy, he coolly fires a flare pistol into the oil he has leaked onto the sea around them, causing the inferno that enables he and Tatiana to make their escape. But the highlight of the film is Bond's battle with Red Grant in the cramped corridors of the Istanbul express; seldom has such an effective bit of action been staged in such a claustrophobic setting.

Looking back on the early Bond movies reveals this to be the last "serious" one; the gadgets and girls were to come shortly in *Goldfinger* (1963) — also available from Warners — Bond's beautiful co-star here was Honor Blackman, star of television's *The Avengers* — she played

Pussy Galore, whose private air force is to aid the nefarious Auric Goldfinger (Gert Frobe) in pulling off the robbery of the century: stealing all the gold from Fort Knox! Goldfinger is a typically colourful villain; obsessed with gold (as the well-known John Barry title song informs us), he paints Bond's girl friend Shirley Eaton all over with gold paint because he thinks Bond has cheated him at cards! He has a hulking Korean manservant, Oddjob, who has a steel-rimmed bowler hat to throw at his enemies. Connery faces up to this formidable opposition with typical coolness, and more than a touch of grim humour; a potential assassin is thrown into a bathrub, followed by an electric fire, which, electrocutes him. "Shocking, positively shocking," comments Bond at the grisly demise.

The gadgets that secret service weapons expert "Q" (Desmond Llewelyn) provides Bond with became more and more fanciful as each film tried to outdo the last. In *Goldfinger*, Bond drives a souped-up Aston Martin

car which was considered the best of its kind in 1963 when the film was made: this is equipped with such devices as an ejector seat to get rid of unwanted passengers; front wing machine guns, bullet-proof windows and built-in radar and smoke-screen — no secret agent should be without one! Director Guy Hamilton made the most of this lovely toy with an exciting chase sequence in which Bond disposes of Goldfinger's minions en masse. The suspenseful climax, with Bond in chains and trying to avoid Oddjob's lethal bowler, is also another highlight.

But that's the thing that has made these movies so successful: there are just so many enjoyable moments that they can be seen many times without losing their entertainment value. Many video users will be delighted to see agent 007 in action on their small screens, and of course Warners have barely scratched the surface of the huge chunk of film folklore that is the Bond

